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SIPDIS

DEPARTMENT FOR EUR/SCE, EUR/ERA, EUR/ACE, USAID E&E

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SUBJECT: ADMINISTRATOR FORE DISCUSSES KOSOVO, POST-LISBON
STRATEGY FOR W. BALKANS WITH COMMISSION

Classified By: Acting PolMinCouns Alyce Tidball for reasons 1.4 (b) and (d).

11. (C) Summary: European Commission (EC) Director-General for Enlargement Michael Leigh thanked USAID Administrator and Director for Foreign Assistance Henrietta Fore on July 11 for the U.S. pledge to Kosovo at the donors' conference, adding that the EU and U.S. will need to continue to work with the GoK to ensure accountability and to enhance administrative capacity in Kosovo. Leigh highlighted the progress the EU has made in Kosovo despite lack of agreement among the 27 member states on recognition, but noted that the EU would face difficult challenges in deploying the EULEX mission and dealing with Serbia's request to the UN for an ICJ opinion. The EC will continue to informally monitor the implementation of legislation in Kosovo and will look for additional creative and informal ways to help Pristina on its European path. Leigh emphasized that the EU remains committed to the European perspective for all countries in the Western Balkans, but the timing of membership applications has been complicated by the failure of the Irish referendum on the Treaty of Lisbon. End Summary.

12. (SBU) In a meeting on the margins of the July 11 Kosovo donors' conference in Brussels, Commission Director-General Michael Leigh expressed thanks to Administrator Fore for the United States' \$400 million pledge. Noting that Kosovo Prime Minister Thaci and his government have been stable and mature in dealing with the challenging circumstances in Kosovo, Leigh emphasized that the reconstruction process will require additional efforts and administrative capacity, and added that all donors will share responsibility with the GoK for ensuring accountability. Fore commended the Commission's leadership in Kosovo and in organizing the donors' conference and agreed with Leigh's assessment of the importance of continued U.S. and EU cooperation.

13. (C) Leigh explained that the EU has been able to make a good deal of progress on Kosovo, including support for the International Civilian Office (ICO), agreement on the EULEX mission and organization of the donors' conference, despite the lack of full recognition among the member states. (Note: In an aside, he noted that the EC had learned recently that Malta would imminently recognize.) Leigh added that it will be difficult, however, for the EU to take steps beyond what it has already accomplished. He highlighted the challenges ahead, specifically noting that Belgrade's push for the UN General Assembly to request an International Court of Justice opinion on Kosovo's independence was "inevitable." Further, while the EU will continue to emphasize the need for the full deployment of the EULEX rule of law mission throughout Kosovo, Leigh said that it was difficult at the moment to see how they would be able to deploy to the Serbian majority areas. He did allow that the new, pro-European government in Belgrade could permit some de facto cooperation on customs,

but it remained too soon to tell.

¶4. (C) Despite the challenges, Leigh emphasized that the Commission would proceed with its unofficial Stabilization and Association (SAA) process with Kosovo. Because the EU is unable to enter into a contractual relationship with Pristina, the EC will have to find creative and informal ways to assist the country on its European path. Leigh explained that the EC's Kosovo Issues team will continue to monitor the adoption and implementation of legislation and the building of administrative capacity on an informal and low-key basis. Given the political constraints, however, the EC will be unable to do more than this for the near-term.

¶5. (C) Turning to the Western Balkans region more generally, Leigh highlighted that, despite the failure of the Irish referendum on the Lisbon treaty, the EU has made fresh commitments to the European perspective for the whole region, including Kosovo. The European perspective for the Western Balkans is not a deeply controversial issue with member states, he noted, although the EC will face some challenges with timing of applications later this Fall. Leigh estimated that the EU could be faced with between two and four applications for membership in the next six months. Albania and Montenegro are eager to apply, but have shown restraint in favor of waiting until next steps on the treaty are determined. Serbia has also made some encouraging progress, he said.

¶6. (C) Leigh explained that a country's request for candidate status triggers a request from the member states for the EC's formal opinion on that country's suitability to

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become a candidate. Even if the request for candidate status is made later this year, the EU will unlikely take further formal steps if the status of the Lisbon treaty remains unresolved. Leigh said that the way forward would be more clear in October, after Irish PM Cowen reported back to the EU. He speculated that a possible resolution to the impasse could involve the European Council issuing a set of declarations that would meet some of the concerns voiced during the Irish referendum, none of which involved EU enlargement. This scenario implicitly assumes that the Irish would then hold a second referendum and approve the treaty. Leigh emphasized that even though this seems the most likely course right now, it is by no means assured, and in the meantime, the uncertainty affects the region's perception of the credibility of the EU's enlargement agenda.

¶7. (U) Administrator Fore did not have an opportunity to clear this message before departing post.

WOHLERS

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